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A

PRESERVATIVE

AGAINST THE

PUBLICATIONS

DISPERSED BY

MODERN SOCINIANS.

IN WHICH

THE IMPIETY AND ABSURDITY OF THEIR
PRINCIPLES ARE CLEARLY SHEWN.

ADDRESSED

BY A COUNTRY CLERGYMAN

TO

HIS PARISHIONERS.

Satan hath desired to have you.

Luke xxii. 31.

The FIFTH EDITION, with Corrections and Additions.

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give away.*

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A
P R E S E R V A T I V E
A G A I N S T
S O C I N I A N I S M.

My dear Brethren,

YOU live in an age, and in a country, in which many think they have a right to do, and say, what they please. Thus far, indeed, we are still under the protection of the law, that one man cannot shoot another through the head, without being hanged for it; unless he does it upon a principle of honour. But, he may asperse characters, accuse the innocent, put darkness for light, and light for darkness, blaspheme God, dishonour the king, and expose the nakedness of his country, without being called to any account. He may erect a literary *Star-Chamber*, wherein all works, in defence of true Religion, and the Polity of the Church of England, are misrepresented, and mangled, without justice or mercy, for five-and-thirty years together; their ears cropped, their noses slit, and thus disfigured they are turned out into the streets, to be scorned by the public; who are hence to collect, that our faith is defenceless, and our writers ridiculous.

Before the flood of Noah, the earth was filled with violence, God was despised, all goodness was trampled under foot, and men were too far gone to take any warning. The Gospel tells us it shall be so again: and all good people, who are not imposed upon, by empty sounds, can plainly see that *licentiousness*, so loudly glorified under the name of *liberty* in these latter days, will be the grand instrument in bringing the new world up to that degree of corruption, which destroyed the old.

That the influence of Christianity, which is now so much decayed, may be less and less every day, books and pamphlets are industriously handed about, among the common people, to turn away their hearts from

Christian Truth to the fables of infidelity. I do not mean that these publications abound with oaths, curses, and obscenity; (though the press is daily delivered of them also) but that they give God the lie in all the doctrines, by which our Holy Religion is distinguished; and if they should be attended to, and received, must provoke Him to transplant the Christian Faith to some other quarter of the earth, which has not so much neglected his goodness.

Some may promise themselves, that when this shall happen, a state of perfect freedom will take place; but, let them know, that how freely soever men may offend against one another, God is not to be intimidated by the claims of licentiousness. The God of Christians is, and will be, the ruler of the world, whether libertines consent to his dominion or not: and they may assure themselves, that the departure of the Christian Religion will be no peaceable event. When the Founder of our Faith expired, the heavens were darkened, the earth shook, and the minds of men were troubled, and confounded. When God departed from the Jewish nation, discord, pestilence, and famine, all the horrors of war, and all the miseries of sedition and slavery succeeded. The destruction of the world, by the flood, the burning of *Sodom*, the captivity of *Jerusalem*, and other like visitations, are to be understood as so many warnings of that fate, which all *apostates* will meet with, in another world, and as examples of what will most probably befall them in this world.

My brethren, I am one of those who, with God's help, would willingly make a stand against that torrent of heresy, and impiety, which threatens to break in upon us: but, there is no chance of doing this, to any purpose, unless we can remove one fatal mistake, which most ignorant people now labour under, and of which the enemies of our faith never fail to take advantage. The mistake is this; that Christians may reckon themselves secure of the favour of God, if they are not guilty of cheating, whoring, drinking, robbing, and murdering. This is the error of the ignorant: and the artful flatter them in it; telling them, that if they do but lead what they call *good lives*, articles of faith are

but

But matters of opinion, and therefore they need not be nice about their Creed. To make this plausible notion the more agreeable, one of our most elegant writers, who was a better poet than a divine, has put it into rhyme :

For modes of faith let senseless zealots fight,

His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.

But a right life can no more grow upon a wrong faith, than grapes can grow upon thistles. This is true, for more reasons than one; but chiefly, because the worst sort of wickedness is the wickedness of the mind against God; upon which, I shall beg leave to offer you some considerations, in the following chapter :

CHAP. I.

Of Spiritual Wickedness.

THE Christian life comprehends two great branches of duty : the first towards God, the second towards our Neighbour. God has an undoubted claim to the first place ; our neighbour has the next ; and we are to love him, and help him, from a sense of our duty to God, who hath commanded us so to do. But if I stumble in the beginning of my duty, and offend against God himself, what reason have I to expect his favour for what I do to any body ? Will acts of kindness towards a fellow subject excuse me for an act of rebellion against my prince, or stop the execution of a statute against treason ? What was the offence which brought death into the world ? Not an offence against society ; for there was none ; but only against a positive command of God. It was revealed, that to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, would be attended with a deadly effect. — This revelation was disputed ; the truth of God was called in question ; the lust of pride prevailed, and the sentence of death followed. Therefore, if Adam destroyed the whole world by sinning against the truth of God, certainly any single man may destroy himself by the same means ; though he should give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned for the good of society.

There is another short way of exposing the same mistake. Consider the character of the devil. He is no member of society ; and, being a *spirit*, cannot commit

the sins of the *body*. He is no glutton, no drunkard, no miser, no adulterer; his wickedness is all of a spiritual kind; or, in other words, it is the wickedness not of the body, but of the spirit. It consists in opposing the wisdom of God, perverting his word, misrepresenting his justice, despising his incarnation, suggesting evil thoughts to men, promoting heresies, and dividing the Church of Christ: in a word, it is the business of the apostate spirit to counter-work the ways of the Divine Spirit by all the efforts of subtilty, falsehood, pride, malice, and contradiction. Therefore, he who opposes God, *as the devil doth*, must be the disciple and minister of the devil; and if he do the same work, what can be expected but that he will receive the same wages? The character most acceptable to the devil, because the fittest for his purposes, is that which most nearly resembles his own: and, for the forming of such a character, he employs the most refined of all his temptations. The stupid sor, the profane swearer, and the rotten debauchee, are low-lived examples of vice: the meanest of the devil's scholars. Besides, these are sometimes known to be weary of their vices, and to forsake his party. But the speculative and philosophical sinner, is a man of figure, whose pride will never admit of his reformation. The Scribes and Pharisees, men conceited of their learning, found ways of eluding the divine law: they therefore adhered to the interests of Satan, and were immoveable in their errors; while the publican was wrought upon to renounce his extortion, and the harlot washed away her stains, with the tears of repentance. The extortioner is drawn away by the love of money, which *answereth all things*; Eccles. x. 19; and the harlot is frequently the victim of treachery, poverty, and a bad education: but, the sinner, who errs upon principle, hath set himself in opposition to the will of God. Meaner sinners transgress the law, but *he* judges it: and where pride is entwined with error, a man sinks with a weight at his heels, which will never let him rise any more.

What are we then to think, but that he who is most like the devil, in his wickedness, is most hateful to God? And this is the case with the spiritual seducer. Hence,

the Gospel gives us warning, that the *wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*; that every thought is to be brought into captivity; that *imaginations* are to be cast down; that Satan hath his *depths*, his *mysteries of iniquity*, as well as his more gross and shallow deceits; that he has agents to recommend his principles, *false apostles*, *deceitful workers*, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ, and solemnly preaching down the Gospel, under the outward profession of preaching it up in a purer manner.

These, my brethren, are dangers, of which few Christians are now aware; and therefore the work of every deceiver, who understands his trade, is more easy and more successful, than it used to be. The cant of *liberty of conscience*, and the authority of private judgment, (both of which are extended to an unlimited freedom of disputing the whole revelation of God to man) have been repeated in people's ears, till they are intoxicated with the sounds, and can see no criminals left in the nation, but such as are condemned at the *Old Bailey*.—When a felon is convicted, and sentence is passed upon him, nobody arraigns the law of cruelty, the judges of partiality, or the jury of persecution. But when the blaspheming *Socinian* goes about to raise divisions in the Church, and to rob Christians of their faith, the most valuable property they have upon earth, an outcry is raised if you offer to interrupt him. Popery persecutes the truth: therefore protestant blasphemy must escape without censure; than which, there can be no greater scandal to the protestant profession, nor greater matter of triumph to the papists, who wish to see all protestants go a round-about way, through Socinianism, into popery.

Upon the Christian plan then, however bad carnal wickedness may be, spiritual wickedness is worse: for the mind is better than the body in itself, and consequently, according to an established proverb, worse in its corruption. Therefore no obedience can be acceptable to God, without that which is the best of all, the obedience of the understanding; no courage is comparable to that which contends earnestly for *the faith delivered to the saints*; no temperance is like that which

refrains from high thoughts, and presumptuous imaginations. Let us then be no longer stunn'd with the affected *good lives* of such as fail in this sort of obedience, whose minds are at variance with the revealed wisdom of God: for there is wickedness blacker than that of common immorality: and moral virtues are something, or nothing, or worse than nothing, according to the principles from which they proceed. If a man, who has made a practice of being drunk every day of his life, should keep himself sober for one day, only that he may have an opportunity of picking his neighbour's pocket, or over-reaching him in a bargain; of what value is such sobriety? Is it not worse than drunkenness? for his drunkenness is beastly, and that is the worst you can say of it; but his sobriety is diabolical. You may apply this to other cases: and, let me tell you, that if spiritual wickedness were but rightly understood, as it subsists in the devil, the original of it all, men could never be cheated, as they now are, with the plausible specious of those, who lie in wait to deceive them: and I verily believe, one good discourse upon the character of Satan, stripping that wolf of his philosopher's coat, and his sheep's cloathing, would have more effect toward keeping many people steady to the truth, than an hundred treatises upon particular points of doctrine.— And this leads me naturally to shew what arts are practis'd, to propagate heresy and infidelity.

C H A P. II.

Of the Method of those who spread false Doctrine.

AS there were false prophets against the Law of Moses, so we are told there shall be false prophets against the Gospel; and as the dignity and value of our law is above that of the Jews, we are bound to look more sharply after those, who would corrupt it. The church never was, nor ever will be, without them; and the apostle informs us, that as the church grows older, they shall *wax worse and worse*. Our Blessed Master has given us one rule for detecting them, which will seldom fail us: *Beware* (says he) *of false prophets, which shall come to you in sheep's clothing*. Here their outward appearance is described; they make their approach to you,

you, not as wolves, but as sheep; not as infidels, but as Christians; not as false prophets, but as the only true prophets you ever met with. Indeed, my brethren, it is very weak and childish to imagine that nothing is sin but that which calls itself so. Does not every bad thing give itself a good name? Therefore when a seducer makes an attempt upon your faith, you must not expect that he will give you notice of his intention at the market-cross, like a common cryer, and say, "Now, good people, look to yourselves, for I am about to deny all the doctrines of the gospel, and am persuaded I can make a better religion than that of the Bible." If he should make such a gross mistake as this, his master would either discard him as a traitor, or give him up as an instrument unfit for all the purposes of seduction. Satan himself, when engaged in the sublimest of his undertakings, never works in the odious character of an enemy to God and man; but begins with *transforming himself into an Angel of Light*: and his assistants, instead of avowing their wickedness, are generally more pompous and plausible in their professions than other men.—Conscience, Reason, Charity, Piety, Purity, and a Love of Truth, are all their own, and others are no better than counterfeits; therefore when a false teacher makes an attempt upon your faith, you may expect him to accost you in words to this effect.—“*My Christian Brethren, I am a sincere Lover of the Gospel, and having the deepest concern for its honour, I would guard you against those who decry human Reason, and forbid you to make use of it, that they may obtrude such doctrines as are agreeable neither to Reason nor the Word of God. Religion is the most valuable inheritance of the human race; and if, by God's Blessing, I can bring you to entertain the same views of it with myself, we shall rejoice together. Though Popery is reformed, yet many errors still remain, which, by the use of Reason, may be driven out. Reason is the gift of God, and so is the Scripture, and they cannot be contrary to one another. There is a spirit of censoriousness, which many professing Christians indulge with too little restraint; but the true Christian beareth all things. My Brethren, be not moved with the*

“ rash censures and reproaches of men : if you will live
 “ godly in Christ Jesus, you must suffer persecution.”
 These expressions are taken from a small canting *Socinian*
 Tract, sold for ONE PENNY, and dispersed in great
 numbers, to poison the minds of the common people.
 You would take the author for a sincere believer of the
 Holy Scripture, perfect in his Charity, and fortified
 with the spirit of a Martyr. But be not deceived : all
 is not gold that glitters. Let me, therefore, beg your
 attention, while I make some remarks on these extracts,
 to shew you that his attempts are quite contrary to his
 declarations, and his doctrines subversive of the whole
 plan of Christianity ; and then you will see what a vast
 difference there is between the sound of words and the
 sense of them.

In the first place then, all sensible people reckon it a
 very suspicious circumstance, when a man opens a cause
 with a panegyric upon *himself*. If a stranger, when you
 enter his shop, were to salute you with the praises of his
 own honesty, his strict regard to the honour of trade,
 and his love to all his customers, past, present, and to
 come, you would look upon all this as a bait, and be
 certain he intended to cheat you. So our *Socinian* pam-
 phleteer, in his title, calls himself a *Lover of the Gos-
 pel* ; he dare not leave you to find this out by his book ;
 but hopes you will be blinded toward the mischief of it,
 by a good opinion of his character, before you enter
 upon it. He professes the *deepest concern for the honour
 of the Gospel* ; but, as he denies all its saving doctrines,
 who can take his word, even though he should confirm
 it with an hundred oaths ?

Then he exhorts you to make use of your own Reason,
 that is, to see things with your own eyes, and not be
 imposed upon by what you are taught ; which is very
 excellent advice ; but he has not followed it himself,
 neither does he intend that you shall follow it. His
 notions are borrowed from *Socinus*, and his Deistical
 followers, particularly from *Chubb*, whose writings
 contain all the secrets of the present reforming divinity.
 So that he cannot justly pretend to the merit of having
 used his own Reason. And as to you, he writes his
 pamphlet with the hopes of *bringing you to entertain the
 same*

same views of Christianity with himself: therefore his compliments to your Reason are nothing but the flattery of one, who is all the while supplanting your Reason, that he may draw you away into his own point of view: in which you will see no more of Christianity than he does: and this he tells you will be a great blessing. For this he helps you to some interpretations of texts or Scripture, so very much out of the way, that your own Reason would never have hit upon them; neither would his, if he had not been told of them.

The imperfection of the Reformation is a topic much declaimed upon of late years; and this author is of opinion, that though Popery is gone, many errors are still remaining. In answer to which, we have this to say for our Divines at the Reformation, that we are sure they believed the Scripture; and their writings shew that they understood it: but as to the Reformers of this present time, we are not sure they do either the one, or the other. The lovers of the Gospel, in Luther's days, took off the superstitious dress of Christianity, but left the body of it secure. If we go to work now, we must reform it, to the bone; and even then some nice judges may be offended with the skeleton, and never rest, till they have set up the Idol of Heathenism; as some attempted to do about fifty years ago; and their officiating minister was Mr. John Toland, who composed a form of divine service to the *Infinite and Eternal Universe*; the *το παν*; from the worship of which they have called themselves *Pantheists*.

The author proceeds to assure us, that as Reason and the Scripture are each of them *the Gift of God*, they cannot be contrary to one another. Right Reason (when we have found out what that is) cannot possibly be contrary to the Scripture, because the Scripture contains the Reason of God: but the Reason of any particular man may be very contrary to it. Dean Swift observed, very justly, that *Reason in itself is a very different thing from Reason in particular men*. So that we want a distinction here; for when we speak of Reason in itself, every man makes himself the compliment to think that *his Reason* is the thing intended. But, it is one thing to have the Gift of Reason, as a human creature, and another

other thing to have the right use of it. The first we have by Nature; the second is the work of Grace; and if a writer put one of these for the other, or imagine them to be the same thing, he will soon talk very absurdly. *Voltaire* had the Gift of Reason; but he had not the gift of using it; for on every subject that relates to Christianity, he reasoned like an idiot; yet with a mischievous vein of wit, which easily catches people of corrupt minds. The philosophizing Greeks, to whom *Christ crucified* was *foolishness*, had their Reason like other men; but education had perverted it, and rendered it contradictory to the Reason of God; so that it was of no use to them in divine subjects, but rather an hindrance. A similar train of education will have just the same effect now: and you must not expect that any person, who abuses his Reason, will confess that he does so. He will go on to boast of Reason in general; and make no exceptions to the disadvantage of his own Reason in particular. When human reason sees things as the wisdom of God sees them, then it performs its proper office; but when it sees them otherwise, then it takes the name of philosophy, and becomes foolishness, like the boasted reason of the Greeks, who, *professing themselves to be wise, became fools*. The world has always been full enough of this sort of reason. How common is it for people to talk about conscience; and yet how few are they who consider what it is! — For conscience is an agreement or coincidence of the judgment of man with the judgment of God. — When conscience condemns what God approves, or approves what God condemns, it is no longer conscience, but conceit and delusion. The conscience of the Socinian scruples the worship of the church of *England* as idolatry; but there is no more reason in it, than in that conscience of the Musselmén, which sends them two thousand miles on a pilgrimage to the tomb of their false prophet. Our author has been very free in delivering his opinion about reason: but, what reason is, and what is the proper use of it; how it may be improved and strengthened, and how it may be so weakened as to judge falsely of every thing, like the jaundiced eye; are questions for which he seems very
much

much unprepared. The mind undoubtedly hath its distempers, like the body. The pride of philosophy was the distemper of the Greeks; the love of this world was the distemper of the Jews; and neither of these could make sense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It will be worth our while to enquire, why he guards his readers so particularly against *Censoriousness*. He finds, by experience, that his own doctrines and writings are odious to all sincere believers, whether Churchmen or Dissenters; and therefore wishes, as any other person would in his circumstances, to escape untouched; because his principles of religion are too unsound to bear any severe examination. But, he who has used the word of God so freely, and has not scrupled to accuse the church of error, absurdity, and the utmost impiety, because it does not agree with his fancy, must not expect to be commended, till we have renounced our faith, or lost our understanding. I grant we ought to be charitable, and merciful, to those who offend, either through ignorance, or infirmity; but neither of these will be pleaded by one, who tells us he is guided by reason, in every step he has taken.

Every Christian, who has not been imposed upon by self-interested counsellors, must know, that zeal towards God is a duty as necessary, and laudable, as charity towards men. The church of *Ephesus* is praised in the Scripture, for *not bearing them that are evil, and for trying them which say they are apostles, and are not, and finding them liars.* Rev. ii. 2. Without doubt, these lying apostles, in the church of *Ephesus*, whose cause would not endure the probe, had many things to say, against the *censoriousness* of those, who detected them. But, we are taught by this, and many other examples, that the censoriousness of faith is more acceptable to God, than the affected moderation of infidelity: and therefore every good man will wish to be called censorious by those, whom it is the duty of every true Christian to censure.

The author, however, has fortified himself, and endeavours to fortify his readers, against every thing that may happen in this way. *Be not moved,* says he, *with the rash censures of men:* that is, go on boldly in your errors, contradicting the Gospel with an apostolical freedom

freedom of speech; and, if you are confronted with the Scriptures, and convicted of blasphemy, persevere unto the end. Such is the advice, which Pride (the most mischievous of all counsellors) whispers into the ear, "If thou hast erred, persist, and justify it; for 'tis possible thou mayest get the victory, by this means; and victory is oftentimes of more moment than truth. Perhaps, thou art a leading man, and the esteem of thy wisdom will influence the conduct of others; and if so, one base retraction may pull down all thou hast built. Be sure then, that it is honourable, it is edifying, it is for the glory of God, that thou shouldest be obstinate." Pride communicates this advice, in a whisper; but, the author speaks it out; and, what is very wonderful, it seems never once to have entered into his head, that he may be *mistaken*. If any man should be enticed to follow him, he too is thenceforward to commence infallible; never to be turned, never to be moved, never to hear any thing that is advanced in opposition to his impiety.—How great, and noble, would his constancy be, in a better cause! But here it is lamentable to see the delusion to which the human heart is exposed. Conceit, obstinacy, and contradiction, when sitting in judgment upon themselves, claim all the honours due to persecuted truth, candour, and wisdom.

C H A P. III.

A brief Account of the Socinian Errors.

NOW we have considered the nature of spiritual wickedness, and the disguises under which false teachers recommend themselves; we are prepared to take a view of the doctrines they are labouring to introduce. These are to be found in a small Publication, abovementioned, which calls itself, *An Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity*. I call them *doctrines*, for want of a better word; but, they are in reality nothing more than so many negatives put upon the doctrines of the Gospel.

You will not so readily understand what it is to deny the Christian faith, till you have recollected, in the first place, what the Christian faith is: you will therefore give

give me leave to remind you of it, in as few words as possible.

The Christian is one who lives by Faith. He knows that of himself, he has no ability to do the will of God, and therefore applies for the assistance of that Blessed Spirit, who is called the Comforter, and, according to Christ's promise, is to be in us, and abide with us for ever. He knows that man is fallen into sin, and death, which are the works of the devil; and that Christ came into the world for no other purpose, but to destroy them: to purge away sin, and to prevail over death.— That as we are in a forfeited state, our Redemption is the work of God's free Grace, to which we have no claim, by nature: That he who effected this Redemption, was the Divine Person to whom the Prophet Isaiah spake, saying, *Behold, your God will come, and save you.* That he fulfilled all the sacrifices of the Law, by the offering of himself once for all, and tasting of death for every man: so that, in him, we have now received that atonement, which the Law described, but could not accomplish.

You have here a short draught of the Christian Religion, with its principal, or leading doctrines. The Rainbow, when its colours are most splendid, is not more visible in the sky, than these doctrines are in the Bible: and therefore good and wise men have preached, and written, and pleaded for them, and suffered for them, even unto death, in almost every age, and every kingdom, of the world; and we shall at last see them crowned, in heaven, for a faithful adherence to them. What think you then of an author, who, being wiser than his neighbours, offers himself to you as a *Lover of the Gospel*, deeply concerned for its honour, and denies them every one; who instructs us, in other words, that human reason is to furnish a man with all his religious notions, and that the Scripture is to give them countenance; that man has power enough of himself to do the will of God; that he is not born in sin, nor elected by the divine Grace; that our Redeemer is no Redeemer, but a good moral example; that he is not God, and that he hath made no atonement for our sins;

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I desire to know how the wit of man, when it has got this new Religion, can put it into a Creed? You cannot begin in the common form, *I believe, &c.* you must say, "I do *not* believe—that any thing more than the religion of human reason is necessary to Professors of Christianity; I have no need of faith; I want not the Grace of God; I need not be called, nor elected, by the divine favour; I do not own Jesus Christ for my God; neither do I desire him to pay any price for my Redemption." This *negative Confession*, fitter surely for a necromancer than a Professor of Christianity, is the favourite object, for the interests of which, a clamorous party assembled, contributed, petitioned, and blotted tons of paper. For this, an unhappy gentleman left his ministry in the Church of England, to preach up the God of Mahometans, in a chamber; and calls this *confessing Christ before men*! For this, their pamphlets are dispersed by thousands, to turn the affections of the ignorant, from the inestimable truths of the Gospel, and inflame their fancies with a set of opinions, which can only lead them to perdition. To draw men from the light of the Gospel, into Socinian darkness, is like the traffick of those, who go about, and deceive the minds of the British poor, with lying representations, to draw them from their native land to some barren colony, where they find nothing but disappointments, hard labour, poverty, and putrid distempers. The change from Christianity, to Socinianism, is as little to be envied, as the transmigration of those, who should leave the scenery of Paradise, and the plenty of Canaan, to associate with the Savages of the South, on a weather-beaten rock, in the Magellanic Ocean; where enjoyment could be nothing but infatuation, and a true sense of their condition, whenever they should return to it, could end in nothing, but horror, and despair.

I shall now beg your attention, while I shew you, more particularly, the false opinions of our Socinian author, together with the dangerous advice he gives you, concerning the chief doctrines of Christianity:—and I persuade myself, you will immediately know
how.

how to judge of these things, when they are stripped of his plausible recommendations.

CHAP. IV.

Of the use of Reason in Matters of Religion.

HE bids you distrust all those who decry human reason. But, if you take his advice, you must distrust the Bible; which informs us, in the beginning of *Genesis*, that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually: and such is the doctrine of St. Paul, who has taught us, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. So that he, who uses only his natural reason, without some higher principle of discernment, which is the gift of God, cannot understand the matters of the Christian religion. This poor man forgets, that Adam and all his posterity are fallen into sin and infirmity, and hopes you will distrust those, whose duty it is to put you in mind of it: as indeed the Bible itself does, from one end of it to the other. We read in the last chapter of the *Revelation*, that whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven. What? Is it possible to love a lie? And are not the affections miserably depraved, which are capable of such a love; especially, if that lie is pointed against the veracity of God, and the truth of his religion; which is the sort of lie here intended? And what faculty is it that makes such a lie? Is it not human reason? No, says the Socinian; it is the abuse of reason. True: and this is the very thing he has forgotten; for man fell from reason into the abuse of reason. Here lies the danger;—not in the use of reason, as such, but in the abuse of it, and in the power of such affections as are subject to love lies better than truth, and which therefore make a tool and a drudge of reason, to serve their own bad ends. This is the danger, of which we warn you; and this is our manner of decrying human reason. We do not mean to decry a man's legs, when we warn him against leaping down a precipice, to break his neck. Is it not our duty to warn him? Especially, if he is so blind, as not to see the danger, and at the same time so conceited, as
to

to think he sees better than we do? Does not the Gospel itself give us sufficient warning, from that deplorable case of the blind Pharisees; whose sin was fixed in them past recovery, because they said, *We see?* So that upon these considerations, I venture to say to you, in words directly opposite to those of your Socinian counsellor, *Distrust all those, who magnify human reason?* the devil did it in Paradise; the blind Pharisees did it; and our Deists and Socinians do it, at this day, to the infinite prejudice of those, who are weak enough to listen to them. Besides, it is proper to advertise you, that, in most of our modern discourses about reason, there is an ambiguity, which it is of the utmost consequence to remove. *Reason* has two meanings: it signifies the intuitive faculty, or *Power of Reason*, in the human mind; and it also signifies *truth of argument*, independent of the mind. These two differ from each other, as a man's feet differ from the road that he travels upon: the road may be a good road, lying straight before him; and this is what we call *right reason*; but if he is lame, he cannot get forward; if the road is rough, and he is tender-footed, he will dislike it; and if he is whimsical or obstinate, he will go another way, to shew people that he understands the road better than you do.

How very wrong is it to affirm, as this author does, *that there is no possibility of replying to the Papists, in their doctrine of Transubstantiation, but by appealing to reason.* What? Shall we be so rash as to allow the Papists the authority of the Scripture, out of a compliment to our own reason? And shall we be so ignorant as to do this, in a matter, where the Scripture expressly confutes them? Christ informed the Jews, that they must *eat his flesh and drink his blood*. They were shocked at this, as a thing unnatural; and our Saviour proved it to be impossible, by observing to them, that they should see him ascend into heaven, where his person should be out of their reach. Therefore, to reconcile all this, and shew the meaning, he added, "The flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are *spirit*, and they are life." So that the Papists are inexcusable for following the example of the blinded Jews,

and

and taking his expressions, in a *bodily* sense. Thus then we may reply to the Papists, out of that Scripture which they allow; and it is better than to appeal to reason; for if by reason, we mean *human reason*, as this man does, then *our* reason is no rule to *theirs*; but if by reason, we mean *right reason*, or *truth of argument*, then that truth, in scriptural subjects, is to be laid down from the Scripture: and, in my opinion, this author has acted neither wisely, nor like a *Protestant*, in giving it up to the Papists.

He sets out to argue with a Mahometan, in the same absurd manner. You must *bid the Mahometan use his reason*, and then he cannot but see that our Religion is better than his. This is a very easy method to convert the Mahometan: we can bid him use his reason, with very little trouble to ourselves: but, I pray, who must enable him to do it? For he is in blindness, and bondage of mind, under the corrupting doctrines, in which he has been educated. It was foretold of the Jews, that they should be *smitten with blindness*, and should *grope at noon day, as the blind gropeth in darkness*. They are now in this state, the slaves of passion, prejudice, interest, and disaffection: and what are we to do with them? We must send our author to them, and he will bid them *use their reason*. But, if we send a Christian to them, who has read his Bible, he will bid them pray to God for that *faith* which is his *gift*, and resign themselves to be directed by him, as St. Paul, their pattern, did, before the *scales* of Jewish blindness fell from his eyes. When Paul was under the prejudices of a Jew, God did not bid him *use his reason*, but struck him to the earth, by the force of a light from heaven, which brought him to a *sense* of his own *blindness*; and that brought him to his *prayers*; and then another miracle opened his eyes; which all the reasoning in the world would never have effected, without the interposition of divine Grace: and yet this Paul never was so far from the Gospel, as the Socinian is: These things are sufficient to shew, that reason, in the state it now is, cannot lead us to God; and that, by itself, it is no sufficient guide, in matters of Religion. You will ask, how then am I to judge of the sense of Scripture? Am I not to depend

depend upon my reason? The Apostle says, not; for that the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation *through faith that is in Christ Jesus*. Of this *faith*, our author says not a single word: he does not seem to know of such a principle; though the *just live by it*, and the Scriptures are full of it. How does it happen that the Jew knows nothing of the Scripture, but because he is destitute of this principle? Though the Socinians are of opinion, that the Jews have always been right in the first and great commandment, and the Christian Church always wrong, in the same, from the beginning. Such is the persuasion of these men of Reason!

CHAP. V.

Of the Power of Man to do the Will of God.

THIS proposition, That man has power of himself to do the will of God, is repugnant to the whole Gospel; and especially to that declaration of Christ, *Without me ye can do nothing*: yet, for this proposition, our Socinian has soberly pleaded: attempting to prove it from those words of the Scripture, where God saith to the people, *Turn ye from your evil ways, why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Hence he argues, that the people had *power to turn themselves*, otherwise God would not have required it. But, unless we are to take the Scripture by halves, we shall find it said by the people, and by their prophets, *Turn Thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned*, Lam. v. 21. and Jer. xxxi. 18. So that, if both these passages are laid together, it follows, that, in the great work of conversion, there is a part for man, and a part for God; as in that exhortation of the Apostle, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure*. Phil. ii. 12, 13. There was a man, who came to our Saviour with a withered hand, of which he had lost the use; yet Christ said unto him, *Stretch forth thine hand*. On this occasion, our author might argue, that Christ did not heal this man, for that he must have had the use of his hand, otherwise he would not have been commanded to stretch it out. But this would be very superficial reasoning;

soning; for the man, in faith and obedience to the word of Christ, attempted to stretch forth his hand, and in the attempt received that power, which was necessary to effect it. It is just so with us; and without question, the miracle was designed to illustrate our own case. God commands us, with our withered faculties, to do his will; we endeavour to do it; and, in the attempt, receive that ability, which is necessary to accomplish it. In all these cases, the will of man, and the power of God, operate together. We turn ourselves, and God turneth us: the man stretched out his hand, and Christ stretched it out for him: we work out our salvation, and God worketh in us at the same time. This is what appears, when we lay the Scripture together: and you see how dangerous it is to listen to those, who argue from a scrap of the Bible, misunderstood, and perverted, so as to render the grace of God of none effect.

Power in man to do the will of God, says the author, *is no foundation for pride; for what have we that we have not received?* The question really is, whether we have this power by nature, independent of the Gospel; or whether it is given to us, in consequence of the Gospel? Certainly not by nature; God having purposely so ordered things, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2 Cor. iv. 7. If all is right in us by nature, and we have within ourselves the power by which we are to be saved, then there are no *works of the devil* to be destroyed, and Christ need not have come into the world. But then it is objected, that if God help us by the miraculous powers of his Grace, this doctrine must encourage us to presumption, and to put off our reformation in hope of some future sudden conversion. To be sure it may do this: and so may all the doctrines of the Gospel be abused, when they fall into bad hands. Some were so perverse as to argue in favour of an *abundance of sin*, that the *grace of God* might *abound* in forgiving it: but the Apostle did not therefore withdraw his doctrine of justification by faith in Christ: he stated the case, corrected the abuse, and left his doctrine in possession, as before. So must we do now: if any ill use be made of the Gospel, we must not

not give the Gospel up, but demonstrate the abuse, and correct it, from the Gospel itself.

C H A P. VI.

Of Original Sin.

IN this chapter, the author allows that we *suffer* by the sin of Adam, but says, it is impossible we should have *sinned* in him. Whether we have sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and how far his individual offence may be ours, is a nice question: but the doctrine of original sin may be settled without it.— If in consequence of Adam's transgression, we have derived from him a constitution, of which sin is the natural fruit, then sin is *original* in human nature, and comes into the world with us; as the leprosy or gout may be *original*, in those who derive it from their parents, and bring the seeds of these distempers into the world with them. If nothing but death had entered into the world by means of Adam's offence, the doctrine might have been doubtful: but the Apostle teaches us, that when death entered into the world, *sin entered with it*; and that death *has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*: the effect is permanent in our suffering, as the cause is permanent in our constitution. The Apostle therefore persists to speak of mankind, as being under the *Law of sin and death*; not of death only, but of sin also; and that *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus* hath made them free from both. The name given to the sinful nature of man, is that of *flesh*, in opposition to the renewed spirit of a Christian. I know, says the Apostle, that in me (that is, in my *flesh*) dwelleth no good thing: and, in the verse before, he speaks of *sin dwelling in him*. At last he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This *flesh*, this *body of sin*, this *body of death*, which is also called the *old man*, and is pronounced to be *corrupt*, are so many expressions affirming that sin is original in man's nature. And if there were no other proof of it in the Bible, this consideration alone would be sufficient, that none can enter into the kingdom of God, unless he is *born again*: for there can be no occasion to save us, by a new birth, unless we are lost, by the old.

C H A P. VII.

Of Election and Reprobation.

HOW far the decrees of God are *arbitrary* is a question, about which we might multiply words to little purpose: and, if we should calculate how many of the human race will be saved, and how many will be lost; we should employ ourselves to as little effect. There is only one thing here to be observed. Our author affirms, that *as surely as we derive our being from a just and merciful God, the terms on which we come into the world are advantageous to us.* This must undoubtedly be true, so far as the Creator himself is the cause of our present state: but it is very mean logic which argues, that because God is just and merciful, man is *on the same terms now*, as when he was *first created*: for this is but to say, in other words, that because God is just and merciful, therefore he hath *lied* to us, in his account of the Fall and its consequences. Neither do these give us any ground of complaint, against the justice and mercy of God: for, he removed from himself the beginning of all evil and vanity into the *liberty* of the *creature*; as he hath reserved in himself the beginning of all restitution to the liberty of his grace; in virtue of which liberty, he calleth whom he pleases, at what time he pleases, and *divideth to every man severally as he will.* This liberty of calling, and distributing, our author disputes with him; affirming, that we certainly (as sure as God is just) come into the world on advantageous terms, and enjoy these terms without being called to them. But, the Scripture, which is of better authority, informs us, that God *added to his church such as should be saved*; and that all the members of it are elected to the divine privilege of being fellow-heirs with Jesus Christ; to which they certainly have no right by nature. The *gifts* and *calling* of God are mentioned together; because it is merely of his free gift that we Gentiles have been *called* to the terms of his Holy Religion. The God, who called *Abraham* from his country and kindred, and afterwards called the Gentiles, throughout the world, by the ministry of his Apostles, *granting* them repentance unto life, hath, by the

the same act of Grace, entitled us to the benefits of the Evangelical Charter: and when we are no longer worthy of our vocation, he may disfranchise us; or, to use the language of the Apostle, he, that grafted us into his Church, may cut us off from it, and reject us, as he hath actually rejected the Jews, for an example to us. It is now as possible for a man to forfeit his station under the Gospel, as it were for Adam to forfeit Paradise: and the ready way to this is proudly to arrogate such rights as we have not: for thus the Jews did. They boasted that they had *Abraham for their father*, and were *never in bondage*. So the Socinian boasts, that he is born to terms of advantage, and denies that he is under the bondage of sin: and therefore, by his own account of himself, he has no need of the Gospel; for the Gospel offers itself as a light to the blind, a help to the weak, a medicine to the sick, and life to the dead.

C H A P. VIII.

Of the Divinity of Christ.

IT would take up too much room to examine and settle all the texts our author has perverted; neither is there any occasion for it. His doctrine will very soon be overturned. "If you ask, says he, *Who then is Jesus Christ, if he be not God? I answer in the words of St. Peter, addressed to the Jews, after his resurrection and ascension, that Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved of God, &c. and man must mean the same kind of being with ourselves.*" The task therefore which he imposes upon you, is only this; that when you find Jesus of Nazareth called *our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, Jehovah our righteousness, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the Sun of Righteousness, the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, by whom all things in heaven and earth were created, and by whom they now consist, in whose person there was God reconciling the world to himself, even all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; I say, when you read these, and numberless other expressions to the same effect, you are to find ways of bringing them down to such a sense, as to leave nothing in them

them all, but Jesus of Nazareth, *a being of the same kind with yourselves.* My brethren, if you think this can be done, then you are too far gone for me to reclaim you. If you think it cannot, then you see the grand error of Socinianism, and I need give you no farther trouble on this part of our Subject.

C H A P. IX.

Of Atonement for Sin by the Death of Jesus Christ.

AS the Socinians deny the Fall of Man, they cannot be consistent, without denying all its consequences; of which, the doctrine of Atonement is one of the most considerable. And a doctrine it is, so plain and striking, that all mankind, who have had any notion of God's purity, and their own guilt, have joined in the practice of offering sacrifices, to avert the wrath of invisible powers; thus giving universal testimony to that great principle of the Law and the Gospel, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission.* And this general attachment to the notion of *expiation* disposed the Gentiles to embrace the sacrifice of Christ, in whom they found that atonement, which they had all desired; and therefore the prophet scrupled not to call him *the Desire of all nations.* But, in this capacity, he is not desirable to the Socinians, who have found out another way of acceptance. They hold, that nothing is necessary, but mere repentance and moral reformation, on the part of sinners; and that God, on his part, is bound by his goodness, to forgive them, for nothing. But now, what are we to do with all those declarations of the Scripture, which speak of Jesus Christ, as a *sacrifice for Sin*? In answer to which, I may venture to assure you, that the same ingenuity, which proves Jesus Christ to be *no more than a man*, can as easily prove, that he was *no sacrifice.* It is true, say they, he is called a sacrifice, but only in a *figurative expression*, as our prayers and praises are called sacrifices. His death was no sin-offering, but only an example of patient suffering for his religion, an example to us to suffer in like manner, if we are called upon; and this, says our author, in his canting way, *was a noble sacrifice indeed.* So

that a noble sacrifice is no sacrifice at all. And now, my brethren, is not this a noble way of interpreting the Scripture? Christ died *for our Sins*: and what does it mean? Nothing at all, but that he died for his own religion! And, if we die in like manner, then we are as truly a sacrifice for him, as he was for us:—and so saith the Quaker, that *the blood of Christ was no more than the blood of any other saint**. But what saith the Scripture? *Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*. Did not the Passover and its blood stop the execution of that vengeance, which fell upon the Egyptians? If Christ then is our Passover, it must follow, that his blood now does for us, what the blood of the Paschal Lamb did for the Hebrews in Egypt: but that blood was *expiatory*, and carried *redemption from death* with it: and therefore so is his; according to that of St. Paul, *We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins*. Was the Passover an example to the Hebrews? Did it die for *its own religion*? No; its blood was accepted for the saving of the people of God, when the unbelieving were destroyed; and therefore Christ's blood, as the great antitype before referred to, is accepted for the same end: otherwise he can be no *Passover*. Indeed, so false is it that Christ's sacrifice was *figurative*, that there never was any *true and proper sacrifice*, but his only. The *blood of bulls, and of goats, and of lambs*, which were offered daily, under the Law, and had the appearance of real sacrifices, could not accomplish what it aimed at: it could not purge the conscience from a sense of guilt: and to shew that it had not done so, those sacrifices were offered repeatedly, day by day, and year by year: but Christ offered himself *once for all*, and, by that offering, *perfected for ever them that are sanctified*. With the merits of this sacrifice, he now appears, as our high Priest, in the presence of God, for us, as the high Priest of the Jews went into the most holy place of the Temple, once a year, with the blood of the yearly sacrifice. We are far from denying, that Christ was an *example* to us in his

* G. Keith quoted these words from Solomon Eccles, a great preacher and prophet of the Quakers. See Leslie's Works, Folio. Vol. II. p. 195.

his *Death*, as well as in his *Life*: but he was not *only* an example, as the *Socinian* falsely asserts. He was an *Intercessor* (a), a *Mediator* (b), a *temple* (c), a *Priest* (d), a *sacrifice* (e), a *ransom* (f), a *price of redemption* (g), a *propitiation* (h), an *atonement* (i), a *lamb slain for the sins of the world* (k): he was, in short, all that the Law exhibited: and instead of being a sacrifice only in figure, all the sacrifices that had been before him, from the beginning of the world, were *the figures*, of which he himself, once for all, in the end of the world, was the *substance and reality*.

If you wish to see the whole doctrine of atonement confirmed and explained in a single text, consider what the Apostle hath said, *Heb. x. 26, 27. If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.* This teaches us, that a fire from heaven is due to sinners, and must fall upon those sinners themselves, unless a sacrifice, exposing itself in their stead, shall turn away the indignation that awaits them. Christ is this sacrifice, accepted of God as our substitute: but, if we depart from our profession, despising the advantage of this substitution, then we can find *no other sacrifice*, but must receive the divine wrath *in our own persons*. When God shall be revealed, as once on Mount Sinai, and that *fiery indignation* which is looked for, shall be falling upon the *adversaries* of the Gospel, then we shall see the necessity of this sacrifice for sin: and, if the sophistry of any seducer shall have tempted us to rely on some other method of salvation, we shall curse the hour, in which we listened to him.

CHAP. X.

Conclusion.

YOU are not to wonder, my brethren, either at the absurdity, or wickedness, of these attempts which are made upon your faith: the Scripture hath told

(a) *Heb. vii. 25.* (b) *Ibid. ix. 15.* (c) *John ii. 21.* (d) *Heb. iv. 14.* (e) *Ibid. ix. 26.* (f) *Matt. xx. 28.* (g) *1 Cor. vi. 20.* (h) *1 John ii. 2.* (i) *Rom. v. 11.* (k) *John i. 29.*

told us, the time should come, when they *will not endure sound doctrine*, but be possessed with an *itch* of novelty: and, as numbers give credit to any false persuasion, it is natural for them to wish, that you may *endure sound doctrine* as little as they do. With this view, they take all possible pains for the propagation of their false opinions; which Dr. Priestley, in false English, calls the *Spread of Truth**. These opinions, as you have seen, are very flattering to human pride: and it is an old saying, that flatterers are easily believed. No deep reasoning is requisite, when the treachery of your own hearts assists them in their work; the success of which is farther promoted by the cheapness of their publications, which puts them into the hands of the lowest readers. Their books fly about the world, at a penny a piece, like the seeds of thistles, which, being little and light, are carried about by the winds, and will take root in any soil, (the worse the better) till they overrun the face of the earth; and this they call the *Spread of Truth*. O let not the husbandman go to sleep, while the enemy is thus diligent, and successful! You may judge, therefore, that your situation is dangerous; and when you are convinced of this, it is hoped, you will be on your guard. And now I have endeavoured, as my duty requires, to shew you what the enemies of your faith have to say, in one of their pieces; you may be able to judge of the rest for yourselves. So, for the present, I shall conclude with that advice of St. John—*Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the World.* 1 John iv. 1.

* See the Preface to his Sermon on "The Importance and Extent of free Enquiry into Matters of Religion."